

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (previously amended): A chewing gum ingredient which is a granulated additive for providing crunch to a chewing gum, said ingredient being incorporated internally into (said gum) wherein said crunch providing ingredient consists essentially of isomalt, said ingredient prepared by a process wherein isomalt is heated at a temperature of above 130°C, cooled to form a solid isomalt product) and granulated to a particle size greater than 50 mesh.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said chewing gum is a sugarless gum.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said process further comprises dissolving isomalt in water to form a solution and heating said solution to above 130° prior to cooling.

Claim 26 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 145°C.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 26 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 160°C.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt contains one or more flavoring agents.

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Claim 29 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt contains one or more dyes or colorants.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 23 wherein said granulated additive chewing gum ingredient has a particle size greater than 40 mesh.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The additive chewing gum ingredient of claim 30 wherein said granulated additive chewing gum ingredient has a particle size range of 30 mesh to 40 mesh.

Claim 32 (currently amended): A process for the preparation of a chewing gum ingredient which is a granulated additive for providing crunch to a chewing gum, ~~said ingredient being incorporated internally into said gum~~ wherein said crunch providing ingredient consists essentially of isomalt, said process ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of:

- a) heating isomalt at a temperature of 130°C or higher;
- b) ^{the heated isomalt} cooling to form a solid; and
- c) granulating said solid to a particle size greater than 50 mesh.

*to
additive
gum
solid
particle
size*

Claim 33 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said chewing gum is a sugarless gum.

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Claim 34 (original): The process of claim 32 which further comprises dissolving isomalt in water to form a solution and heating said solution to above 130°C prior to cooling.

Claim 35 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 145°C.

Claim 36 (original): The process of claim 35 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 160°C.

Claim 37 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt contains one or more flavoring agents.

Claim 38 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt contains one or more dyes or colorants.

Claim 39 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said granulated additive has a particle size greater than 40 mesh.

Claim 40 (original): The process of claim 39 wherein said granulated additive has a particle size range of 30 mesh to 40 mesh.